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## The case for listener-supported radio

THEODORE ROSZAK

IN THE WAKE OF REVOLUTIONARY agitation throughout Europe, it occurred to the Minister of Technology that the rising tempo of aggressive dissent, especially among students, just *may* have something to do with the fact that the existing media of mass communication provide extremely narrow outlets for significant public controversy. Of course Mr. Wedgewood Benn might be mistaken in assuming that more active debate *via* the media will lead to less rather than more popular rebellion. But he is indisputably correct in observing the obvious: namely, that those who govern the media in Britain quite as much as in any other European country, have assumed no better than a reportorial relevance to what is becoming an unruly international demand for participative democracy. The media may present us with the sensational surface of what is happening in the streets of Europe at best from a painstakingly objective perspective; but they do not make themselves available as the instruments of the great debate of the day. They are the passive and not the active voice of our contemporary history: a neutral eye and ear, rather than a lively forum.

Wedgewood Benn's unexpected but timely call for a "radical re-examination of mass communications" comes at a time when there is clearly a great deal of re-thinking being done about the purposes of mass communications in Britain. In the recently published *May Day Manifesto* radio-TV broadcasting comes in for special and scathing analysis by the radical socialist left as part of their cry for more access to the media by dissenting minorities. At the same time, BBC-radio presses ahead—grudgingly—with the introduction of more local broadcasting, in a long overdue effort to adapt radio to regional community needs. And commercial radio is far from a dead issue. An *Observer* feature on April 21 speculates that the next Tory government will very likely succeed in opening commercial outlets at least at the local level

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and reports that there are even BBC executives who now look forward to tapping the advertising revenues of these stations for the Corporation. The renewed push for commercial radio may even begin with the retirement of Hugh Green.

In this situation, it helps to have as many options on the table for consideration as possible, lest the rare opportunity of liberalising broadcasting in Britain should be lost for lack of well-considered alternatives. Even the commercialisation of radio—a prospect that many principled liberals and radicals seem to regard as a sell-out to profiteers that can only lead to an intolerable American-style vulgarisation of the medium—may hold forth some very promising possibilities, *if* the situation is shrewdly exploited. Indeed, the idea I want to discuss here—that of organising non-commercial, listener-subscription stations similar to those operated in the United States by the Pacifica Foundation—might actually prove most feasible as an adjunct of commercial broadcasting. But whether pressed in league with commercial interests or as an independent proposal on the part of Britain's cultural and political minorities, subscription radio could be the most promising way of vitalizing the mass media. I am convinced personally that it would be a far more exciting experiment than one could expect to come of any venture in publicly owned and operated radio, whether on a national, regional, or local scale.

The first Pacifica station (KPFA—which broadcasts, like BBC local radio, on a UHF signal) was founded in 1948 in Berkeley, California by a group of local citizens—mainly pacifists and anarchists, who, having grown justifiably fed up with the state of the American mass media, undertook a noble experiment in do-it-yourself community radio. The principal figure in the enterprise, and KPFA's first station manager, was the highly gifted Lew Hill, a man who combined all the characteristics of the ideal enlightened despot: intellectual brilliance, organisational know-how, and an exciting vision of excellence that dictated standards of excellence for Pacifica broadcasting that then (as now) had no peer in the United States. What Hill and his talented co-workers did was to organise a radical magazine of the air which, like any principled minority publication, would have to pay its way by the subscriptions of its audience. By ruling out any resource to commercial revenues, Pacifica was able to qualify as a tax-free educational foundation—and so it remains today. Its only source of income is the voluntary contributions of listeners who become subscribers upon paying \$15 a year (previously the figure was \$12, with student subscriptions offered at a cut rate). The station can be heard by anyone in the San Francisco Bay area *without* subscribing, but—miraculously enough—a sufficient number of people have always willingly paid in one way or another for what they might hear free on KPFA to keep the station on the air. In fact, so unpredictably successful has Pacifica been that in the early sixties the foundation was able to set up sister stations in Los Angeles and (with the help of a philanthropic millionaire station owner) in New York City—both of which operate on the same legal and frequently fragile financial basis, but as fully independent stations with their own

staffs and station managers and local responsibilities.

Needless to say, a station supported in this way—even in New York, where the UHF signal reaches a population comparable to that of London—exists in a chronic state of financial crisis. For it is invariably the case that the station's expenses (which in the case of KPFA come to roughly \$100,000 annually) overreach what subscriptions alone can bring in. The 7,000 to 9,000 paid subscriptions that KPFA has maintained over its twenty year history (out of a San Francisco Bay area listening audience of about three million within the station's broadcast radius) always leave an annual deficit which has totalled upwards of \$50,000 in recent years. This gap has had to be made up by special appeals of one kind or another. In the last few years, the most effective fund-raising exercise has been the 24-hour around-the-clock marathon broadcast which has succeeded in producing the needed cash within 5 to 7 days' time. (These marathons, incidentally, often result in some of the most enterprising programming the station does.)

In addition to subscriptions and special appeals, all three stations remain dependent on a good deal of voluntarism to make ends meet. But besides being a financial necessity, voluntarism turns out to be one of the delightful communitarian characteristics of Pacifica. Most of the announcing is done by volunteers, as well as most of the routine secretarial toil. When station remodelling is needed, subscribers with some know-how can be relied upon to drop around and lend a hand. When mass mailings must be done, "envelope-stuffing parties"—replete with red wine and folk-singing—are held at the station. Above all, with the exception of recordings that must be purchased from outside producers—like the BBC transcriptions Pacifica occasionally draws upon—the stations are wholly reliant on the freely-contributed talents of programme participants and correspondents. Some participants, like the poet and critic Kenneth Rexroth, have been contributing weekly programmes ever since Pacifica began. Pacifica's other regular contributors have included Alan Watts, Gunther Schüller, and Paul Goodman. Finally, the stations are all too dependent on the fact that their small, paid staffs of highly talented people exploit themselves by working for less than half of what they could earn elsewhere.

Compared to the richly financed BBC, Pacifica is run on a shoestring. What quality of broadcasting can one expect from such a low-budget operation? The answer is a higher and more exciting level of programming than the BBC or any local variant could ever achieve.

Pacifica cultural programming is invariably more enterprising than that of the Third Programme. It has a heavy (though not exclusive) emphasis on the experimental in drama, poetry, music and criticism. The oppressive sense of caution and officialness that hangs over the Third Programme has been swept aside at Pacifica, where there is only minimal care for matters that seriously concern BBC producers: a slick and well-rehearsed presentation, so-called "balanced" programming



from week to week, time scheduling, and, over the long run, an amicable relationship with establishment circles based on what is called "good taste" and "responsible broadcasting".

On public affairs, there can be no doubt about Pacifica's superiority to the BBC. For a habitual Pacifica listener like myself (I am also its voluntary London correspondent) the striking feature about the BBC is the pathetically narrow range of its political coverage and this obsession with what broadcasters call "balance". This usually means that in the midst of any controversy the BBC will normally content itself with calling in Labour, Tory and Liberal spokesmen—plus, perhaps, a few other prestigious experts—and offer each a few minutes of comment.

Now in fact what such people have to say on most public matters is quite uninteresting (because totally predictable) if not wholly irrelevant. And in any case, no serious problem can be decently discussed in snippets of comment elicited by a hurried interviewer who is feverishly budgeting everybody's time as he seeks, somehow, to balance out the clashing opinions. Controversy does not yield to such handling without becoming distorted.

Nor does it survive the crude process of being filtered through the approval of the Home Office or Ministry of Defence, or, as in the case of the recent *Cause for Concern* programme on race, through the threats of Scotland Yard.

Nor even the well-made documentary, at which the BBC does such an admirable job, comes to grips with public debate as honestly and directly as free conversation between committed speakers. Indeed, the "objective" documentary, with its highly polished cutting and splicing and constant editorial selection, can never be anything but a tape editor's opinion of what *other* people's opinions are and of what they are worth—and so it is often a poor substitute for true discussion.

The openness of Pacifica to dissenting opinion can be illustrated by the experience I have had while serving as its correspondent in London. In 1964 I recorded a 70 minute discussion among three leading figures in CND. The speakers assumed afterwards that this informal conversation would be edited by Pacifica to 15 minutes of selected remarks. They were as surprised to learn that the tape would be used in its entirety, as I was amazed to hear from them that, even at the height of the campaign's importance, CND spokesmen had never been given so much radio time to discuss *on their own terms* and in total freedom of editorial intervention the issues they took seriously.

Or again, in 1965, when the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination was launched, BBC TV "covered" the event by allowing CARD's general secretary to share some four minutes of time with a right-wing extremist (for the sake of "balance", you see). Even then the interview had to be carefully rehearsed and the participants coached by an adamantly neutral producer as to what sticky issues it might be advisable for them *not* to bring up in that limited time. But I was able to record more than an hour of open discussion with CARD's general secretary and two other spokesmen for the immigrant

community in Britain—and the entire discussion was broadcast by Pacifica.

Coverage of this kind is the rule not the exception at Pacifica. It is a matter of basic philosophy that serious controversy demands lots of free wide-ranging and continuous talk—not edited fragments or the glossy straitjacket of the conventional documentary. At Pacifica it is taken for granted that the best way to get an issue discussed is simply to put concerned and reasonably articulate people in front of a microphone and let them do what comes naturally. No rehearsals. No time limits. No slick editing.

If, for example, Pacifica had been on the scene in London this spring, there would have been a long and steady stream of on-the-spot broadcasting from the beleaguered student insurgents at Hornsey and Guildford.

Perhaps the best way to indicate the character of Pacifica's programming is to give a few examples of the kind of thing Pacifica can do that British radio could not at present undertake.

1. *Significant public statements.* At present, the only access the British public has to important addresses is by newspaper reports or recorded excerpts. Neither radio nor TV here feels free to take out an hour or two hours—or more—to present in its entirety a significant public address. Whether it is Martin Luther King preaching at St. Paul's, or Enoch Powell giving voice to British racism or Melina Mercouri speaking and singing in Trafalgar Square, or Allen Ginsberg reading poetry at the Albert Hall, or Herbert Marcuse addressing the Dialectics of Liberation Congress, there is no way in which the entirety of such statements can now reach the general public.

Yet it is often impossible to evaluate a statement unless it is heard in full, as it was delivered with every inflection and nuance in place—and unless the audience response can also be heard: the cheers, the heckling, the questions. Pacifica, in contrast, not only presents as a matter of course the whole of such public addresses—and many of them every week—but it has broadcast entire teach-ins and conferences that may run for ten or twelve hours.

2. *A full spectrum of opinion.* It is one of the policies of Pacifica to make air time available to precisely those minority views that the mass media ordinarily screen out, and to make such time available generously, regularly, and on the speaker's own terms. Pacifica stations feature regular commentators (who usually appear weekly, year in and year out) to offer an anarchist or Trotskyite or John Birch or vegetarian or theosophical or unclassifiable-independent analysis of the passing scene.

In contrast, when a friend of mine recently produced an edited series of interviews with anarchist spokesmen for the Third Programme,\* one had the impression the BBC thought of this as a daring venture, one not to be repeated for many years to come. So all the interviews had to be squeezed into place around such primary questions as

\*The text is printed in ANARCHY 85.



"What is anarchism?" Again, such is the vice of the documentary programme done with caution for the sake of "balance". If they are decently articulate people who clearly have something to say, they will be given a microphone and air time. I know of no broadcast medium or publication anywhere that regularly offers a wider range of political and cultural opinion than the Pacifica stations.

3. *All-night broadcasting.* If one judged by the BBC, one would have to conclude that London buttoned down for the night at midnight (excepting the pop music on Radio 1)—a habit an American would associate with drowsy mid-western villages where roosters still take the place of alarm clocks. Obviously there is a decent sized population of night people in England—but apparently the BBC cannot bear the expense of broadcasting for them. At Pacifica late night music (especially jazz), informal conversations, horsing around, amateur folk-singing, poetry reading, etc., frequently fill up the small hours, reminding one that cultural brains don't necessarily keep banker's hours.

4. *Bull sessions.* Because Pacifica is not run by technicians, but by culturally and politically engaged people, there is no hesitation about making the station available for totally unstructured talk between good minds—even if it results in something that sounds like a normal human conversation, something one would never expect to hear on the BBC.

After performances of the San Francisco opera, KPFA will invite three or four opera addicts to the station to spend 90 minutes or so running barefoot through their opinions of the productions. The coffee cups clink and clank, and the talk rambles, stalls, overlaps, and sparkles with spontaneity and warmth; just three human beings who love and know the art, chewing it over as they normally do after a performance.

Or again, one of the most absorbing programmes I have ever heard consisted of some three hours of rampant conversation between Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Timothy Leary, Alan Watts, Norman Krasner and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, recorded one evening (though God knows why) at Watts's houseboat home. From the BBC's point of view, the tape would have been unbroadcastable due to poor sound quality (and there were naughty words). But then broadcast technicians are not conversationalists.

5. *Criticism.* The restrictions under which newspaper and periodical reviewers must work are well known. They must submit their material too soon and cramp it into too little space. At Pacifica, station critics are normally free to choose when they want to report and how much time they want to take. One of KPFA's film reviewers used to take up some 90 minutes twice a week dealing with current cinema. That is the equivalent of some 45 typewritten pages of material. (And, in this case, the reviews were worth every minute they took for the reviewer was Pauline Kael, author of *I Lost it at the Movies*. She started with Pacifica and has gone on to become America's sharpest film critic.) Such reviewing, together with frequent discussions of the arts, gives the cultural scene far more intensive

coverage than I think any publication can achieve.

6. *News.* Since the news coverage of the better British newspapers is incomparably superior to that of all but a couple of American papers, there may be less urgency about improving news reporting in Britain than in the US. However, even the British press—not to mention the radio and TV, which are every bit as bad at the job as their American counterparts—tends to treat the news superficially and anecdotally. In the San Francisco Bay area, which is a journalistic wasteland, KPFA answered the need by simply renting the Associated Press wire service and doing its own thirty minute daily newscast, supplemented by extended reports on big stories. In those thirty minutes, a group of hard-working and intelligent volunteers are able to report more significant news than all the newspapers of the area combined. There has been no other source for reliable Vietnam news in the Bay area besides KPFA. What the experiment made clear to many of us is that the big wire services happen to be an excellent news source. If few people realize this, it is because the agencies that utilize them (the papers, radio and TV) often cut and gerrymander what the wires give them until it is meaningless. Nevertheless, the news wires do carry vast amounts of information on hundreds of stories from highly conscientious reporters—stories that may run to thousands of words only to be chopped down to a paragraph by a sub-editor making room for an advertisement. While renting a wire service like Reuter's is an expensive proposition, this could well turn a London listener subscription station into a vital, independent source of reliable information.

In the San Francisco Bay area it would be no exaggeration to say that KPFA has become the indispensable element within a vital cultural and political community which the station itself created. More than a radio station, KPFA has become an electronic agora. I doubt that anybody in America could ever have guessed that radio—that noisy, gimmicky, commercial box—could ever be this good, this adult, this creative, this necessary to thought and culture. Whatever the legal technicalities under which Pacifica is governed, I think I speak for thousands of KPFA subscribers when I say we regard the station as *ours*, that it defines the community to which we belong. What is it that most essentially explains the role the Pacifica stations have come to play in the life of their audience? I think there are two factors that make all the difference.

The first is independence. Pacifica is ultimately responsible to no one but its own listeners—to no sponsor, to no institution, to no creature of the state. There is absolutely no other way than this to gain the freedom for controversy, criticism and experiment good radio requires.

This is precisely where radical left groups like the British *May Day Manifesto* people make their mistake in plugging for "public ownership of the means of cultural production . . . and their leasing, through public trusts, to properly constituted and democratically managed professional companies of journalists, actors, film-makers, or broadcasters." How greatly would such a state-dependent approach



differ in the field of radio from the present BBC? What are these "public trusts" going to look like, if not the BBC—bureaucracy all over again, but now farming out its production work to "professional companies" (whatever those may be)?

Similarly, those who look forward to more publicly owned *local* radio would seem to be campaigning for nothing better than pint-sized BBCs which would probably be more cautious because they would be more closely supervised by local power structures than is the nationwide BBC. *Only when the licensing function of the state has been reduced as far as possible to the purely technical job of keeping broadcasting signals out of one another's way (the principal role of the Federal Communications Commission in America) can the possibility of free radio arise. And only when stations become financially dependent on no one but their own audience can that possibility of freedom be realized.* For obvious reasons, no one in his right mind would suggest that the state—in any form—should become the paying publisher of all newspapers and periodicals. Why, then, should we think the state capable of financing all broadcasting without becoming on the one hand dictatorial, or on the other, bureaucratically oppressive, soggy, and timid—the latter being the main failings of the BBC?

Secondly, Pacifica has always been characterized by an inveterate *amateurishness*, which, at last, is the station's finest quality.

In the nature of things, since Pacifica is a non-paying proposition for everybody concerned, it attracts only those who are sufficiently involved in politics and culture to work primarily for the love of what they do.

There would quite simply be no Pacifica if programme participants were not willing to contribute their words and works, if the staff were not willing to exploit itself working for half of what its talented members might earn elsewhere, if members of the community were not willing to help out continually at everything from remodelling the studios to editing the news each day for broadcast, if station managers were not willing to kick in their salaries—as they often have—to pay the urgent bills during lean seasons.

Clearly, this is not the "professional" way to run a station—if by "professional" one means the pursuit of a special skill for which one trains and then expects generous rewards and a sense of special status. But it is the way to run an electronic agora which is intended to be the province of those who have something to say.

Such people are called artists, teachers, musicians, critics, and broadcasting should be primarily in their charge. The greatest trouble with the BBC is that it is a bureaucracy loaded from top to bottom, not with artists, teachers, critics, but with people who are "professional broadcasters".

Having nothing to say or perform themselves, they act as the purveyors of other people's talent and, in order to demonstrate their "professionalism", they tend to worry themselves in esoteric terms about foolish things—such as: whether or not there are extraneous noises on a recording, whether or not a tape-splice clicks, whether or not people's

articulation is up to snuff, whether or not somebody has said something vulgar on the air, whether or not programme x "balances" with 16 other programmes that come to mind, whether programme y should be heard at 7.25 p.m. or 9.08 p.m., whether programme z is "suitable" for 20 million working class listeners . . . or will they find it too . . . too . . . well, difficult?

The Pacifica staff, in contrast, is made up of culturally and socially involved people. Pacifica music directors have normally been composers or musicologists. Drama and literature directors have been novelists, actors, critics, or theatre directors. Public affairs directors have been political activists with ample experience in war resistance or the defence of civil liberties and social justice. Such people care about essentials because they are not "professional broadcasters".

And these are the people who make the key decisions at Pacifica. They break the rules, they experiment, they goof, they improvise. Often enough, programmes of remarkable technical excellence come of it all—but if not, that's hardly the most important issue, is it? Often enough, too, such amateurishness produces programmes that offend or annoy. But offended listeners can switch off (Pacifica stations are designed for selective, not constant, listening anyway). Or they can de-subscribe . . . but then Pacifica is *minority* media, not mass media. And as long as it has enough subscriptions to go on, it's in business, regardless of where the high ratings go.

What are the chances that subscription radio can be launched in Britain? Very poor if the idea is not intensively talked up, starting now, with a view to putting it in the field as part of an imaginative campaign to democratise the media. Commercial interests have been able to break the BBC television monopoly, and they will surely make their bid again to gain access to radio. It would do Britain's cultural and political minorities little credit if they proved to be less clever and less determined than the country's hucksters.

## Radio freedom—an anarchist approach

GODFREY FEATHERSTONE

THIS ARTICLE IS CONFINED TO SOUND BROADCASTING and to examining: difficulties in planning anarchist alternatives to the BBC; the myth of "public service" broadcasting; the BBC's structure, ethos, attitudes, financing; censorship; news; the sound radio art; local radio; possible action.

### ANARCHISTS AND BROADCASTING: PROBLEMS

The best hope now to exemplify and further anarchism is a nation-wide federation of Pacifica-type, listener-supported stations and,



possibly, intervention in local radio, but the considerable power remaining at national and international levels where selection is made inevitable by limited time would present great difficulties.

Should anarchists consent to broadcast on the BBC? Practically, they must to let most people know our views at all and the few opportunities allowed have been used well—see Richard Boston's *Conversations about Anarchism, Anarchy* 85 and Colin Ward in *What's the Idea?, Selected Articles from Freedom*, 1962. But as much harm as good results, since we thus reinforce the myths of "public service" and "liberalisation" in the BBC, disguising its authoritarianism in exchange for a minute air-time.

Much severer problems confront reshaping of TV: great technical difficulties and expense would prevent decentralisation on the scale of sound radio (250 stations possible), leaving dangerous power-concentrations in time-allocation. Secondly, some contents have to be limited: clear evidence shows that some realistically violent scenes do reinforce violent tendencies in a minority and sometimes do teach them techniques of assault which are used.<sup>1</sup> Who decides and how? A genuine thinking-through of such problems is needed in place of the usual utopian evasions.

#### **"PUBLIC SERVICE" BROADCASTING**

Liberal reformers, whilst acknowledging grave defects, cling to the "public service" myth to defend BBC and local radio from direct commercialisation and over-emphasise their differences from state-controlled or commercial broadcasting. These differences—bogus independence and impartiality, the catering for minorities, better programme-shaping free of "natural breaks"—do have valuable effects, but finally serve in the subtle process of mystification, concealing the British power-structure.

True, most governments have direct control, but this shows weakness and causes public mistrust. The British ruling-class exercises an indirect, all-pervasive control through recruitment of its members to the majority of top BBC posts internally, on the Board of Governors and the many advisory councils: those recruited from elsewhere are given a "professional", "liberal", sometimes with-it gloss and gradually absorbed.<sup>2</sup>

As present governmental motions show (the appointment of Hill, Curran and speeches by Crossman and Wedgwood-Benn) the BBC can be temporarily independent of government. Suez and Eden's attempt to "take over the BBC altogether and subject it wholly to the will of the government", and to prevent Gaitskell broadcasting was defied by the BBC.<sup>3</sup> Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall judge that this "seems, in retrospect, to have been something of a turning-point", towards an increasing flexibility and responsiveness to public attitudes.<sup>4</sup> An insipid liberalising, yes, but to oppose a government is not to oppose the ruling class (of which the BBC is part) and here that class was temporarily divided; its strongest part, including BBC men, seeing Suez as against its economic interests and US economic interests which many shared. Hence, the rapid disposal

of Eden. Twelve years went before this attempted take-over was revealed by Harman Grisewood to the public whose "service" it is supposed to be, long after pseudo-democratic politics could be affected via the 1959 election and, of course, the full story will not be revealed until the end of the century when William Clark, press adviser to Eden, and others allowed to publish their memoirs.

Who judges the public interest and what serves it? *Pilkington* answers: "... the Governors' and Members' (ITA) concern is to represent and secure the public interest in broadcasting. It is for them to judge what the public interest is, and it is for this they are answerable."<sup>5</sup> Appointed by, and thus representative of and answerable to, whom? The Prime Minister. A typical board, largely drawn from banks, insurance companies, the top fifty combines, was that of 1954: Sir Alexander Cadogan (National Provincial Bank, Phoenix Assurance, former foreign office head); Lord Clydesmuir (Colvilles, ex-Tory MP, ex-Governor of India); Sir Henry Mulholland (Eagle Star Insurance); I. A. R. Stedeford (Tube Investments, National Provincial Bank, Colonial Development Finance Corporation); Marshal RAF, Lord Tedder (Distillers' director, chief of Air Staff, 1946-50); Barbara Wootton, economist (now Baroness Wootton); Sir Philip Morris, educationalist; and Lord Macdonald of Gwaenysgor, Labour peer.<sup>6</sup>

A rarely asked question is: just what public service value and what independence from the government are the External Services supposed to have? These broadcast many more hours a week than the combined sound and TV total—95 hours of broadcasts a day in forty languages—and are financed by grants-in-aid from the Treasury. If the government decides to stop or restrict external broadcasts (as it did in early 1967 to Albania, China and the Middle East), the BBC obeys. Little is made known to the British public of the running and contents. Perhaps they would seem too obviously propagandist to British ears, thus undermining the "trustworthy" image at home.

Further public service comes from the "broadly representative" 31 main advisory councils and committees. Who judges their representativeness and selects them? The BBC. Their activities are not reported. Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, BBC Chairman, 1947-52 wrote: "the appropriate sections of the BBC staff kept in very close touch with all these Advisory Committees and succeeded in planning the programmes in such a way as to obtain the practically unanimous approval of all of them because in all cases due regard was paid to their criticisms. . . ."<sup>7</sup> The BBC's selection criteria and the mediocrity of most programmes are explained here.

The "public service" mystification—unfortunately believed by many worthy people—suits the ruling class and usually the government as a most effective protection. If it ceased to be, the government has absolute power over the BBC. The Postmaster-General can: "from time to time by notice in writing require the Corporation to refrain at any specified time or at all times from sending any matter or



matter of any class specified in such notice". (BBC Licence, Clause 15(4).) What if the BBC disobeyed? Clause 24 empowers the Postmaster-General to revoke its licence—and the approval of parliament is required neither for this nor even for the revocation of the royal charter.

### THE BBC'S STRUCTURE

The BBC's structure is totally authoritarian, but exceptionally flexible in its public relations, concealing its nature by its smooth Establishment diplomacy to some and by its recent "liberalisation" of image: it patronises its main audience by its largely queasy and unsuccessful imitation of "pop radio" and flabbily "chummy" or "with-it" pseudo-intimacies on Radio One.

It is: "an organisation with an almost messianic belief in its own superiority, a strangling sense of tradition, an all-pervading bureaucracy, and a structure of departments that have been called—justly—little empires. . . . The chain of command in such an ant-hill organisation is Army-like. . . . Because of the BBC's size, the men who make up the corporation are graded like privates, NCOs and officers." (*Observer*, 21.4.68.) Employing 22,000, it is ruthlessly and wastefully run as a huge semi-state-capitalist business and ever-increasingly becomes almost as concerned with audience ratings as ITV rather than quality of programme, interest or enjoyment. (Clearly many minority programmes occur, often with good effects, but ultimately function as mystifying agents, whatever the intentions of those involved.)

This organisation's monopoly on sound broadcasting (and commercial broadcasting would be worse) has meant a paucity and timidity of academic research and of truly radical and honest criticism. Historians may lose their way in the maze of polite deceptions, unrecorded, unreported negotiations, half-secret relations between broadcasters and government, particularly between foreign correspondents, the External Services and the government,<sup>8</sup> the Official Secrets Act and the fear of employees who have no alternative employer. A simple content analysis of news programmes over time would expose once and for all the myths of trustworthiness and impartiality: no such research has ever been done. Working broadcasters cannot make structural or radical criticisms, if they wish to keep their jobs or central positions (they might be shuttled into a harmless job or be given obscure promotion).

### GENERAL BROADCASTING EFFECTS

Centralised mass media may encourage passivity and conformity in their audiences. Firstly, limited time and overcrowded schedules cause fragmentation and blurred distinctions between news items, general information, comment, educational items and entertainment. Secondly, publicly owned media are indirectly affected quite as much as commercial media are directly affected by the capitalist society which increasingly relies for its continuance of profits from ever more rapidly changing fashions, instant obsolescence, mostly unnecessary advanced consumer and luxury goods. The prevailing ethos insists on speed, the new, the fashionable, the present moment, the instant

indulgence. Enough information to place a single issue in its overall social context or to complexly relate it to past causes is rare.

Thirdly, exposure to a flood of information so fragmented may serve as a "narcotising dysfunction"—drugging rather than activating the audience who mistake knowing about problems for doing something about them and who may not consciously recognise this, so strongly effective is it. Lazarfeld and Merton describe the media's possible promotion of social conformity: "not only from what is said, but more significantly from what is not said . . . (they) continue to affirm the *status quo* . . . in the same measure fail to raise essential questions about the structure of society. Hence (they provide) little basis for the critical appraisal of society (and) indirectly but effectively restrain the cogent development of a genuinely critical outlook."<sup>9</sup> Dr. Silvey, a Head of BBC Audience Research, has also said: "The mass media do very largely confirm ideas which are already structured and held. . . ."<sup>10</sup>

So-called "public-service" media, claiming impartiality and a liberal outlook, less blatant, subtler, more indirect, seemingly well-intentioned may reinforce the *status quo*, even more effectively. The BBC's call is always to moderation, compromise, "realism". Muggeridge described this wash of "gentle persuasion . . . patiently wearing away angular opinions; like waves on a beach, ebbing and flowing, transforming rocks and stones into smooth round pebbles all alike. . . ."<sup>11</sup> P. P. Eckersley, ex-BBC employee wrote: "There is no need to say things directly over the air: the attitude of mind revealed in day-to-day behaviour is itself powerful propaganda. Political beliefs need not be imposed. . . . There is no open insistence on conformity . . . example is so much more potent."<sup>12</sup>

### CENSORSHIP

That the government has never used its complete powers over the BBC is testimony to this. Only four types of broadcast have been prohibited outright: (1) broadcasts on controversial subjects—a ban lifted in 1928; (2) programmes anticipating parliamentary debates (the 14 Day Rule, from July 1955 to December 1956)—"perhaps . . . to enforce party discipline by removing opportunities for back-benchers and non-conformists to appeal directly to the country by radio or television";<sup>13</sup> (3) editorialising by the BBC—still in force, but its employees *do* editorialise in *The World at One*-type programmes; and (4) party political broadcasts for a single region of the country. The arrangements between BBC and main political parties on election broadcasts' time—a party must put up 50 candidates to have any at all—negates even the formally democratic rights of many political minorities and by itself exposes the fraud of claims to balance, political impartiality and democracy, since no small movement or party can gain majority support or any of the things necessary to do so.

Generally, the BBC's employees can be trusted to censor themselves. Editorial controls are exercised mainly by programme producers, given written directives or lists of forbidden subjects whose existence the BBC denies. Probably, the majority do censor automatically:



"key personnel merely instinctively understand what is expected of them by the governors and Director-General."<sup>13</sup> The BBC has banned mentions of royalty and the Church from light entertainment programmes, but now allows some. It banned Petula Clark's *The Sky* for an "offensive" reference to God and even records of Noel Coward's *Sail Away*. It removed Muggeridge and Altrincham from its programmes for faintly critical articles about royalty.

Few programmes are made about nuclear warfare (sometimes, a genuine dilemma, since they might gravely affect mentally ill viewers) and amongst those abandoned were Peter Watkin's *The War Game* and a fine René Cutforth documentary, thought to favour CND. Even pop or folk songs are restricted: for nuclear war references in Barry Macquire's *Eve of Destruction*, Tom Lehrer's *We'll all go together*, in songs by Paul Jones and the Hedge-Hoppers; for imputing war guilt to the ordinary soldier in Donovan's *Universal Soldier*; for alleged political bias in *Easter Week and After*.

In a severe crisis, the BBC's function becomes clear. In the 1926 General Strike, all unionists, Labour politicians, even the compromise-proposing Archbishop of Canterbury were refused time. BBC supporters claim this as having been necessary, in order for the BBC to protect its independence when Churchill and a Cabinet minority wished to take it over completely. Reith wrote: "... since the General Strike was declared illegal by the High Court ... we were unable to permit anything which might have prolonged or sought to justify the strike ... since the BBC was a national institution and since the Government in this crisis was acting for the people ... the BBC was for the Government in this crisis too."<sup>14</sup> News was not much distorted, but simply omitted. P. P. Eckersley wrote: "I shared with a few the staggering experience of comparing all the news as it came in with that considered fit for public consumption. Many ... who had been proselytising the BBC as the impartial public servant were bitterly disappointed."<sup>15</sup>

In the 1930s, Churchill was refused time to give his views on India and, like others, to warn of Nazi Germany's dangers. Spanish Civil War supporters—of either side—were excluded. In 1955, Eden had time to speak on the national railway strike: no strike leaders then, or at any time, have had a comparable chance.

#### NEWS AND NEWS FEATURES

BBC news seems to many more reliable and objective than the press. It is not. Its functional unreliability is forgotten: words heard are not remembered like words seen; broadcasts cannot be returned to and checked or kept as a record of events or located in complex causes; a 10-minute bulletin covers all selected events in a word total less than two *Times* columns.

News may be consciously intended to be impartial, but the language employed shows the BBC's functional bias, as these notes reveal: "The South Vietnamese Government"—neutral?—no, implies complete or main control of South Vietnam; "The Viet Cong"—more foreign-sounding, omits ideas of "nation" and "liberation" in the

NLF; Wilson-Smith negotiations—*World at One* begins: "At last there seems hope of a settlement"—implies our and BBC's hope, disregards Africans—only African legal party spokesman interviewed, not ZANU or ZAPU; planned engineering strike could "cripple our economy"—whose?—negotiations "bring hope that strike can be averted" or "warded off"—note fear-inducing physical metaphors; Strikes always said to "cause" production delays or laying off of men—neutral "dispute of employers and workers caused" could be used; Strike "threats", but dismissals "redundancy" due to "rationalisation" or some other "necessity" or sensible, modern move; Mexican police brutality—usually very small casualty estimates—brutality made clear, but main emphasis on whether Olympics could go on and whether government could "restore order" in time. Londonderry incident reports had similar change.

The BBC's authoritarianism often slips through: *World at One's* frequent concern as to why "unions have so little control over their members" and right-wing Tories and left-wing Labour MPs termed "rebels" who "threaten" to "split" party, when it is the leaders who ignore conference-approved policies, not them.

To us the bias is obvious, but not to most and nowadays it is camouflaged even further by a "liberal" image—giving a few minutes to Communists, Anarchists, Nationalists, ex-cons, abortion law reformers, atheists, humanists, etc.

Foreign correspondents' bias is more obvious—e.g. in *From Our Own Correspondent*—now "liberalised" by allowing Richard West to describe some cruel US actions in Vietnam in a few items. Listen to Priestland, US correspondent, an advocate of Britain joining the USA; Elkins, Israel, a hawkish patriot; the pro-federal reports from Nigeria, Matthews, Paris, on the May events: "it would be an ingenious brain which could distil a coherent philosophy from such a wild mixture of the screams of competing revolutionaries".

#### SOUND BROADCASTING AS AN ART

The sound broadcasting art has scarcely used creative and social powers. Using sounds alone, with no imposed pictures or rigid, linear print tending to fragment and narrow thought processes and imagination, can stimulate a habit of thinking in terms of dynamic complexes of ideas or far-reaching constellations or "fields" of imagery. Sound can tap the flow and structures of feelings of ordinary people, if they speak directly for themselves about their lives' central experiences and actuality is made fuller, complex, concrete through the tone, pace, rhythm and stress of their speech and the hard-bought particularity of their images and comparisons. Skilfully, tactfully and simply relating actuality material to song, Charles Parker's *Radio Ballads*—*Singing the Fishing, Song of a Road, The Ballad of John Axon*—about the efforts, strengths, risks, hardships, discriminating wisdom rooted in most people's working lives did this with an impact greater than a multitude of political propaganda efforts.<sup>16</sup>

Sound can disrupt our very notion of social reality with its implied notions of what is "realistic", "practical", "sensible" and open the



way to freshly creative anarchist ideas and images of a whole new society, culture and, consequently, mental framework. *The Goon Show* had some such potentialities. Ridiculous? It opened up the mind to new and imaginative connection and to imagine a transformed reality. Its humour concentrated on sound and the multiple meanings and host of irrational and distant associations which the spoken word can evoke, surrealistically transformed environments—the “cardboard replica” theme—and ridiculed outmoded conventions.

These programmes and a few isolated ones—Beckett’s radio plays, some Dylan Thomas broadcasts, Stoppard’s *Albert’s Bridge*, Irene Kassorla’s *Mr. Blake*—are nearly all to have escaped the deadening, bureaucratic ethos of the BBC in over forty years. It seems very likely that listener-subscription broadcasting organised as a federal network of local radios on the principle of completely free access could produce work of this quality—and better—very much more freely and often.

### LOCAL RADIO

Present local radio is crippled by its BBC connections and its subsidy from local rates: sometimes councils have scarcely consulted ratepayers—most don’t want the service, haven’t a VHF set to receive it, see money cut from other badly financed local work. Already in Sheffield strong pressure is developing against this subsidy and/or for commercial sponsorship. At least the BBC “public service” myth produces some good effects in line with Thomas’s theorem: “If men define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences.” But an even poorer service may result from the commercialisation of local radio and/or the BBC. Most Tory, and a strong group of Labour, MPs (including Crossman and Callaghan) and a large BBC group favour some or all of this. Strong pressure grows from: the advertisers (the IPA and ISBA) who claim that local radio would be a valuable new selling medium; the Local Radio Association, representing over a hundred companies registered to provide local commercial stations; the ex-pirate radio business forces and London and Manchester local authorities.

There is little public demand for local radio and a relatively weak commercial and union opposition (some newspapers, record companies, the NUJ, the Musicians Union) to commercial radio. The demand won’t grow much over most of the country where there are no stations—none in Scotland or Wales, one in the South (Brighton).

Present local radio can’t radically criticise local authorities. It depends on them financially and the anticipated citizen-local government dialogue is likely to be one-way transmission with what seemingly “forthright” and “lively” criticisms there are mostly functioning as “liberalised” mystification as in national BBC broadcasting.

Still, we should not write off local radio completely. Even now, it has limited possibilities to move some listeners nearer to our position. We should take at their word those obviously well-intentioned local radio workers—like Jack Thompson of Radio Sheffield—at their word when they invite “anyone to try his hand” at making and broadcasting

programmes with only “minimal assistance from radio staff”.<sup>17</sup> Attempts to silence us and others we encourage will at least make the situation clear to the public—and some radio staff and would-be-broadcasters may draw valuable conclusions from their disillusion.

The possibilities of local radio have been outstandingly outlined by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall (*Peace News*, August 14, 1964) and Rachel Powell in *Possibilities for Local Radio* (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University), though they are both dependent on the BBC idea and Powell is sometimes vaguely gossipy. Their politics, methods, qualified trust in the BBC, great overestimate of the gap between “public service” and commercial broadcasting are not ours, but we may share many of the same values and ends—as in their severe criticisms of the concept of “mass” audiences and audience-rating criteria in the selection of programmes in commercial broadcasting (and to a greatly increasing extent in the BBC) and their emphasis on an interlocking network of minority broadcasts. Anarchists can share part of their hope that local radio (properly organised) will have the following features and effects:

(1) A reversal of the trend to centralisation: “Voices, accents, experiences, tones of voice have been concentrated into *one* centre, *one* tone: the metropolitan.” Culturally neglected areas match economically deprived ones, so that “local networks should serve, nourish and restore the individual character, the vigour and native strengths of each area”. Discussion, controversy and decision are all increasingly centralised. Hoggart and Hall expect that the remoteness of most people from centres of power, their being “cut off from the democratic process” will be favourably altered. If encouraged people do express detailed and constructive ideas, do become socially and politically active, they will at least benefit from the probable frustration of their newly awakened expectations or the dilution of their ideas to the point of ineffectuality.

(2) Stations should be a forum for the voices of the area—“a forum as free from pressure, whether Establishment-paternal, commercial or local government, as can be devised”. The same educative effect can occur here, especially since the newly aroused expectations can already experience the true nature of the “freedom” permitted by BBC and local government and may very possibly soon experience commercial restrictiveness in harness with one or both of these.

(3) Local radio can be more personal and intimate, speaking with and through first-hand local experience. Powell comments: “skill and confidence grow directly in proportion to the confidence that somebody is listening, that the channels of communication are open. When they are manifestly *not* open why should anyone learn to think, speak or write fluently”. She recommends that children be involved in making broadcasts, almost wholly their own. If channels seem partially open and expressive skills are learnt by their practice, a great range of new hopes and demands may grow—in the light of which the real remaining blockages of hierarchical authoritarianism will be revealed very sharply.

(4) Local radio could bring people together in many ways and unite



most active members of the community, while exposing through personal contact or refusal of it the nature of publicity-avoiding local politicians and civil servants. It can help break down divisions between old, middle-aged and young, encouraging mutual aid and discussion in more and different ways than may be intended. It can throw light on conditions in local schools, hospitals, mental homes, old people's homes, housing and stimulate action through the urgency and strength of the voices of people living in these conditions, rather than provide a mystifying substitute for action in the glib, half-baked liberal sympathisings and the impersonal statistical abstractions which broadcasting now provides. If unofficial strikers demand access to the media, they may convince (through their very localness and personal concreteness) many who view them through the eyes of centralised firms, unions and media as "disruptors" and "trouble-makers" inciting action on small and trivial issues.

(5) All sorts of creative people may be brought together, building a much more united pressure on politicians and business in place of the isolation and competition for charity from weak and separated groups. Given time, the station itself could be housed in a combined community and arts centre (and laboratory) physically bringing together a diversity of people whose mutual feedback of artistic, social and political experiences of potentialities and imposed limitations in the community would enable them to see the oppressive local—and by inference—national systems as a whole and to realise, in opposition to that oppression and through such contacts, that a united movement to transform the whole system will remove, rather than simply alter, the obstacles to their own special needs and expectations.

#### POSSIBLE ANARCHIST ACTION

(1) Anarchists should find and spread as much information as possible about the true nature of "public service" broadcasting—through systematic contents analyses of all news, political, informational and educational programmes, through penetrating the BBC's internal secrecy, through investigating the contents and functions of the External Services, through investigating the domestic BBC's real links with government. Opposition to commercial broadcasting must be strongly and clearly made so as not to weaken one system which might be replaced with a worse one.

(2) They must think through and publish plans for a federal network of listener-subscribed Pacifica-type local stations and grapple with those difficulties earlier mentioned.

(3) They must take advantages of all those opportunities offered by local radio.

(4) Illegal political broadcasting has some point, but can only have a very limited effect, unless money were found for a ship in international waters (possible, but unlikely).

(5) Most people regard the media as simple transmitters, we can educate them into seeing their functional, inevitable bias and can draw attention to particularly bad cases of bias by non-violently invading studios of national or local stations and non-violent obstruction of

particular programmes, as well as using all the less extreme forms of propaganda—pickets, marches, sit-downs and sieges outside the stations, wall newspapers, etc. To focus people's attention on the media as part of the oppressive system, rather than as near-neutral transmitters is the most important first step.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See L. Berkowitz, *Aggression*, McGraw-Hill, London.

<sup>2</sup>See Hoggart and Hall, "Local Radio", *Peace News*, 14.8.64, and Hall, "Class and the Mass Media", *Class*, Anthony Blond.

<sup>3</sup>See Harman Grisewood, *One Thing at a Time*, Hutchinson.

<sup>4</sup>Hoggart and Hall, *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup>*Report of the Committee on Broadcasting*, 1960, HMSO.

<sup>6</sup>See S. Aaronovitch, *Monopoly*, Lawrence & Wishart.

<sup>7</sup>See Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, *The BBC From Within*, Gollancz.

<sup>8</sup>See *Observer*, 21.4.68: "A BBC man explains: 'Your man in a foreign capital hears something and rings his friend at the Foreign Office to pass it on. He does not broadcast it. You see this a lot.'"

<sup>9</sup>Lazarfeld & Merton, "Mass Communications, Popular Taste and Organised Social Action", *Mass Communications*, ed. W. Schramm, University of Illinois Press.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in R. Williams, *Communications*, Penguin Special.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in H. Fairlie, "The BBC", *The Establishment*, ed. H. Thomas, Anthony Blond.

<sup>12</sup>P. P. Eckersley, *The Power Behind The Microphone*, Scientific Book Club, London, 1942.

<sup>13</sup>See H. Street, *Freedom, the Individual and the Law*, Pelican.

<sup>14</sup>See A. Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting*, Oxford University Press.

<sup>15</sup>Eckersley, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup>See Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts*, Hutchinson.

<sup>17</sup>Jack Thompson, "Radio Sheffield", *The Listener*, 4.4.68.

## Pirate political radio

### NORMAN FULFORD

A CAUTIONARY TALE in the field of free radio may be found in the history of the nuclear disarmament campaign. One of the factors which led to the formation of the Committee of 100 in 1960 was a feeling that the mass media were blocked to information about the dangers of nuclear weapons. For many of its founders—especially Bertrand Russell and Ralph Schoenman—one of the main reasons for organising mass illegal demonstrations was that they would force the mass media open, that publicity for civil disobedience would involve publicity for nuclear disarmament. But the mass medium under the most stringent control of the authorities is broadcasting, and it was thought that there was no guarantee that even mass illegal demonstrations would force radio and television to give information about the Bomb.

A proposal was therefore made at the first meeting of the Committee of 100 that a pirate radio station should be set up to break the BBC monopoly and give the publicity that was wanted. Nothing further



was done under the official auspices of the Committee, partly because there was no point in involving more people than necessary, and partly because there were some members—including full-time workers and important officials—who were uneasy about abandoning the Gandhian principle of openness. But a group did set up a pirate radio, which broadcast under the name of the Voice of Nuclear Disarmament for a little more than a year, from early in 1961 to early in 1962. The group included some of the people who had been most active in forming the Committee of 100, as well as the person who made the original proposal, but it managed to work outside though alongside the Committee without any clash in authority or breach in security, and in this it may be seen as a forerunner of such groups as the Spies for Peace and Scots Against War.

But there were two troubles. One was that the radio station was inefficient. The equipment used had to be portable and dismantlable and was therefore relatively small and simple. It was therefore not as powerful as it should have been, and in fact it was only used on television channels when normal programmes had ended, which is not an ideal arrangement. The broadcasts were made from private vans and houses in many places, but there was never much of an audience or a public reaction. Some people heard VND who might not have been familiar with the idea of nuclear disarmament, and some papers mentioned VND who might not have given publicity to Committee demonstrations, but in general far more people read papers sympathetic to nuclear disarmament than ever heard VND, and far more publicity was given to Committee demonstrations than was ever gained by VND. This was partly the result of the other trouble, which was that in fact the mass media were *not* blocked to information about the dangers of nuclear weapons. Several papers which were not entirely sympathetic to CND and were definitely opposed to Committee demonstrations maintained a policy of giving quite a lot of space to the Committee case—the *Observer*, the *New Statesman*, and above all the *Guardian*—and even broadcasting proved to be more open than had been supposed. In the end everything which VND ever broadcast was some time or other broadcast on BBC radio or on one of the television channels.

A few years later, some successful pirate broadcasts in South-east London attacking the General Election in October 1964 led to an attempt to revive VND as a libertarian pirate radio station, but its first broadcast in North and South London at Easter 1965 was such a total fiasco that it was also its last. There is still plenty of equipment in existence to set up a libertarian broadcasting system of some kind, and there are plenty of people who would be interested, but this cautionary tale has a clear moral. There is no point in pirate broadcasting unless you have something to say which can't be said in any other way—either through official broadcasting or through your own papers or pamphlets—and unless you are efficient enough to make sure that what you say is heard properly by a number of people large enough to make the risk worthwhile.

## The rise and fall of pirate radio

ROBERT BARLTROP

THE MEDIUM, WE NOW ALL KNOW, is the message. Radio in its lifetime has been not one message but two, with different technical components postulating separate social functions. Since that lifetime has run with my own, I can dissertate. The first radio my family owned came in 1930, and took up most of the dresser. It was a stained-wood box with elaborate beading and a half-inch aperture for tuning, the speaker a silk-backed fretwork panel standing apart; there was a tome-sized high-tension battery, and behind that the accumulator which I had to take for re-charging once a week. In a year or two my father learned of connection to the mains, so the battery and accumulator went. Not long afterwards we had our unified superheterodyne receiver, a great veneered casket of all-pervading sound.

This was the age of valves. The number of them in one's radio was an index to social status—six, eight, ten, in cabinets as big as suitcases. The valves were the medium in which the message was implicit. As radio's essential components they made the receiving set a solid piece of family furniture: what came out of it had to be family instruction and family entertainment. Listening was assumed to be a group recreation. A great deal of radio entertainment was simply the piping indoors of the auditory parts of older-established enjoyments. (The BBC's music-hall programmes actually had troupes of chorus-girls who clattered in unison unseen.) The audience was expected to be living-room gatherings who might equally have gone to a variety theatre together. The same assumption was made in all the wartime exhortatory broadcasting—families listening after tea, father in the armchair and mother darning socks. Indeed, one's conditioning was such that listening-in through headphones in hospital during the war seemed curiously wrong: one should be hearing radio with other people, not in privacy. Radio was public.

The new medium and the different message were transistors. Suddenly spreading everywhere at the end of the nineteen-fifties, transistor radio receivers appeared first as pocket editions—miniature sets to be held in the hand or slung from the wrist, taking pop-sounds along the street and on buses and round shops. The irritation caused by their ubiquitousness helped disguise what was really happening: radio had become too public, the complainants cried. Likewise, the papers talked about a great revival in the popularity of "steam radio". Both



contentions were wrong. The transistor set was not valve radio resurgent in the television age. On the contrary, television had taken over and extended the family-group function of valve radio. The transistor sets were an innovation making radio for the first time as private as novel-reading, and turning it to something which—to quote McLuhan—“gives privacy, and at the same time it provides the tight tribal bond of the world of the common market, of song, and of resonance”.

Thus the medium, and the first loud echo of the message was pirate radio. Transistors gave birth to pirate radio, by making explicit the demand for a day-and-night flow of popular music. It was hardly possible for the BBC to meet such a demand. On one hand, it could be met only by the continual playing of records, and the 1956 Copyright Act allowed only 75 hours of recorded music a week. On the other, there were the BBC's well-established attitudes which treated pop as an ignoble art. A BBC pamphlet as late as 1966 referred disdainfully to the sort of broadcasting stations which were not wanted: “amplified juke boxes of the kind familiar to people who have travelled to some overseas countries”.

The earliest pirate radio stations opened between 1960 and 1964 on ships broadcasting to Northern Europe and Scandinavia. Most were closed down in relatively short times. The first to open for Britain was the celebrated Radio Caroline; its name, indeed, became a popular generic for all the pirate stations. Caroline was started by Ronan O'Rahilly, a pop-music promoter whose father owned the Irish port where an ex-passenger ferry was taken to be fitted out for use as a broadcasting ship. The preparations were made in secrecy, partly because of the risk of prohibitive legislation by the British Government, and partly because a rival venture—Allan Crawford's Radio Atlanta—was also under way.

In the event, Crawford's start was delayed by the loss of financial backing (his ship eventually was bought with £55,000 provided by the Bank of England). The search for backers and advertisers led, inevitably, to secrecy breaking down, and in February 1964 the Postmaster General was questioned in the House of Commons about Caroline. He spoke of breaches of international agreements and interference with radio frequencies, and hinted at legislation. O'Rahilly retorted that Caroline could not be touched by the British Government. On March 27th, the ship arrived near Harwich and dropped anchor five miles out, in international waters. Simon Dee began the first transmission. Radio Atlanta opened a few miles away on May 9th; two months later it merged with Caroline.

More stations followed—Radio Sutch, run by the Screaming Lord, which became Radio City; Radio London; Radio Essex; Radio Invicta, later Radio 390. Hopeful amateur small-boat efforts started and disappeared. At the same time, there were reports of brawls and thug-gangs, and three operators were drowned when a supply-boat sank. To the arguments growing over pirate radio there was added flavour of moral approbrium. The Postmaster General threatened but delayed action. A total audience approaching ten millions was claimed, and

Caroline's charge for peak-hour advertising was £90 half a minute.

The content of pirate broadcasting was little else but non-stop pop. As competition and sponsorship grew, however, other features forced their way in. Caroline and her advertisers ran competitions for fairly big money prizes—on one occasion the Caroline Cash Casino paid a jackpot of over £4,000. Daily time on nearly all the pirate stations was bought by the Radio Church of God—hot-gospel programmes in a hectoring, doom-stricken voice whose warnings can hardly have been falling on the most recipient ears. There were Radio Caroline, Radio London and Radio Scotland Clubs, and Radio London opened the “Big L” discotheque in London. A later station, Radio 270, made a speciality of bargain offers for its listeners.

All the stations sold photographs of their disc-jockeys. The disc-jockey cult had been given moderate rein by the BBC; in pirate radio it became mildly hysterical. The jockeys were all products of their own stations, all young, fast-talking, and given to verbal clowning in mid-Atlantic brogue. Their patter was an incredible gibberish, suggesting almost contempt for the audience, but without doubt the audience was hooked on it. The whole process was—is—the one described by Trotter in his *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*: “The successful shepherd thinks like his sheep. . . . He must remain, in fact, recognizable as one of the flock, magnified no doubt, louder, coarser, above all with more urgent wants and ways of expression than the common sheep, but in essence to their thinking of the same flesh with them.” Paul Harris, in his recent book *When Pirates Ruled the Waves*, describes antagonisms among disc-jockeys for the projection of their own images to the ten millions.

Pirate radio stations were profitable. According to a survey by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, Radio London was making a profit of £20,000 a month in 1966, and its head, Philip Birch, had gained half a million pounds. Some of the stations made considerable incomes from “Payola”, payment for having records played. Radio Caroline was reported in 1967 to be charging £100 to broadcast a record thirty times a week. (This explained the curious “hit parades” and “top twenties” announced regularly by the pirate stations, that bore little resemblance to the musical papers' charts.) Major Oliver Smedley, writing his story in *The People* in October 1966, said: “Nothing was too low, too unethical. There always seemed to be an urgent struggle to influence the actual records put on the air.”

It is doubtful whether the struggle was anything more than an extension of the normal goings-on of the pop-music industry. The pirates defended themselves by pointing out that they had broken the monopoly of the EMI, Decca, Pye and Philips record groups: by expanding the field of pop-broadcasting they had, in effect, promoted innumerable smaller companies. O'Rahilly, as a musical agent in 1962, had found it impossible to get a hearing for performers not recorded by the monopoly companies. It was strongly argued, too, that the pirates evaded not only the laws but the obligations of copyright and so robbed composers and artists of their rightful earnings.



Some pirates replied that they did in fact pay copyright fees. More commonly, however, they pointed to thousands of letters from composers and performers thanking them for "plugging" their records.

While the pirate stations prospered, there had been a change of Government and a change of Postmaster General: Labour instead of Conservative, Mr. Wedgwood Benn in place of Mr. Bevins. Mr. Benn's answers to questions about pirate radio were unspecific, and the controversy focused on the future of radio generally as much as on them. The Post Office responded to demands for prosecution by saying that illegal transmissions were by no means easy to prove in a court of law. The pressure for Government action was eventually made irresistible by two events within a few weeks of each other. First, in May 1966 two new stations opened on a single ship, Britain Radio and Radio England, both broadcasting from the *Laissez-Faire* off Harwich. Financed by a business group which included Pearl & Dean, the cinema advertising company, these two had more powerful transmitting equipment than any other pirate. Almost immediately there were complaints of waveband interference from all over Britain and from Europe too. But the effect also was to force other stations to increase their output similarly. Radio London and Radio Caroline both bought new transmitters, and yet another new station, Radio 270, caused havoc in the north-east.

The second event was perhaps the strongest factor of all in bringing the pirate stations down quickly. It was a series of happenings in the second half of June, and it had the effect of hardening public opinion against the whole pirate enterprise; showing it to be, as Paul Harris says, "a business of intrigue, threats, violence and intimidation, brought about by the increased competition in what had developed into a full scale pirate war". On June 19th Radio City was boarded and seized by a group of men and a woman. Two days later Reginald Calvert, the head of Radio City, was shot dead in Major Smedley's Essex cottage. Smedley, who had been Chairman of the original Radio Atlanta company, pleaded that he had killed Calvert in self-defence and was found not guilty of manslaughter.

The story told at the committal proceedings and the trial was squalid. Others added their bits. Simon Dee was quoted as talking of "the dawn of war—that's why I got out". The *Daily Telegraph* referred to "men whose names are pronounced with ease in City circles" as being involved in buy-offs, punch-ups, and blackmail. What alarmed the citizens most, however, was that the pirate stations appeared to be indeed outside the law. Whatever happened at Radio City's disused fort in the Thames Estuary, or on any of the ships, was—like the broadcasts—beyond the reach of the British Government. Sir Alan Herbert demanded that the Navy be sent at once. On July 1st the Postmaster General announced that the long-threatened legislation to deal with pirate radio was being brought forward before the summer parliamentary recess.

The Bill—the Marine, Etc., Broadcasting (Offences) Bill—was introduced by a new Postmaster General, Mr. Edward Short. The

estimate that it would become law early in 1967 gave the pirates nine or ten months to mobilize their forces. Some announced that they would remain in business by supplying and manning their ships from foreign sources, or moving to Iberian waters. Others concentrated on fighting the passage of the Bill. The fight was led by Radio 390, a fort station near Whitstable. From September 1965 Radio 390's policy had been to play "sweet", non-raucous music, and this brought it a considerable following among older people (the station's *alter ego* was "Eve, the Woman's Magazine of the Air"). The listeners were asked to write to their MPs—100,000 were claimed to have done so. Radio Caroline employed a public relations agent to meet MPs, and put out car stickers with the avowal "I love Radio Caroline".

In September, without waiting for the Bill to be passed, the GPO served summonses on Radio 390 and Radio Essex. These stations operated from forts within the Thames Estuary. The prosecution argued that under the terms of the Geneva Convention of the Sea the Thames Estuary was a bay, and that the forts therefore were in territorial waters. Both prosecutions were (foreseeably) successful. Radio 390 lost its appeal, returned to the air and was quickly brought to court again, this time to receive an injunction restraining it from further broadcasting. The final campaigns were organized and the final skirmishes fought. There was a curious last phase between the passing of the Marine Broadcasting (Offences) Bill through the Lords and its becoming law, when the pirate stations—presumably defiant from the hopelessness of their position now—dabbled in politics to the intense irritation of the Government.

One other oddity, too, related by Paul Harris:

"The Prime Minister, Mr. Wilson, was leaving a conference of Labour women at Southend-on-Sea when a boy, Nigel Fell, of Thundersley, Essex, who had a tape recorder, stepped forward and asked him what was his attitude to commercial radio. Since the beginning of independent radio in Britain Mr. Wilson had never made a full statement giving his own opinion on the offshore stations.

Mr. Wilson started to answer the boy's question and had spoken on the subject for about half a minute when the microphone was noticed. Three burly detectives immediately rushed forward, seized the microphone and erased the tape.

It appeared that Mr. Wilson's views on the issue were never to be recorded for posterity. The incident may be regarded as more than curious, it may even be found disturbing that in a so-called democracy such a thing could occur."

The Bill received the Royal Assent and became law on August 15th, 1967. Despite the plans and protestations, and O'Rahilly's announcement that he would appeal to the United Nations, the pirate stations acknowledged defeat and closed down by midnight on the 14th. Only Caroline North continued for a time from a point near the Isle of Man, until the law reached there as well. The crews and the disc-jockeys came ashore, to factories, labour exchanges, or the BBC. The debates



over pirate radio had brought promises of a reorientation in broadcasting once the Bill was passed, and a whole new schedule of programmes by the BBC included the new channel to supply day-long pop to the ten millions.

Why did they do it? The pirate radio phenomenon was the product of transistors. Nevertheless, it had its own impetus and reasoning. It was done for money, of course; but its existence and extension were supported as matters of principle by people with nothing to make from it. There was, for instance, a considerable body who saw commercial radio as a preferable system anyway. Others were anti-corporation for different reasons—it is likely that pirate radio appealed strongly to young people not only because of the pop but also because it represented an opposition to imposed patterns.

Why, also, was the Government so insistent in suppressing the pirate stations, once it felt impelled to act? The reason given most persistently, overcrowding on the medium waveband, does not really hold water. 208 stations are authorized by the 1948 Copenhagen Convention to operate on medium wave. At the present time 510 are doing so. The 302 on unofficial wavelengths include Vatican Radio, the Voice of America, and Radio Luxembourg. The pirates' addition to the number obviously did not help, but they were few in relation to what was already happening. Nor did the cigar-smoke sleaziness exposed in the Smedley case give anything approaching an adequate reason. It happened conveniently to rouse moral support for the Government's case; but the fact is that equally distasteful revelations could be made of a hundred commercial corners where the competition is hot.

The conclusion patently is that the State, after not too much consideration (and that was of the means, never the end), *had* to have control of broadcasting. The arguments about commercial radio and "amplified juke boxes" were a smoke-screen across the issue. Commercial radio is as feasible in Britain as commercial television, and on the same terms—a charter system in which the medium supports itself from advertising but remains ultimately in State hands. The offshore stations' real piracy was not their commercialism but their repudiation of any liability by the medium to the State. Likewise the content. The last thing the BBC or the Government desired was to wrest the right to broadcast continuous pop music. Most MPs would have shared the BBC's contempt for pop. Mr. Andrew Faulds may have put the wind up Parliament when he told an alarming story about plans for a political propaganda station. But the content did not matter; the vital thing was control of the medium itself.

To see "control" in the narrow sense of regulation of the contents is to miss the point. Obviously regulation can and does take place, either directly as in wartime or indirectly by constant reference to approved sentiments. Nevertheless, the BBC opened its own juke box in imitation of the pirates; and a surprising amount of stuff on radio and television is warming to revolutionary hearts. Certainly it can all be stopped and the direction altered at any time. The important thing,

however, is not whether it happens at all, but to see that it does not happen from another source. Radio, whether it is the big set in the living-room or a million pocket-sets carried in the streets, is a sensory habit. The earlier radio medium assumed and addressed social groupings; the present one addresses individuals and creates its own unity among them. Thus, it is the medium itself—rather than the sounds which come from it—that is a hand on consciousness's shoulder, and it is hardly surprising that the State will not let go.

Pirate radio was not "free" radio. The freedom it argued was the commercial free-for-all. Its financial backers were business men grasping greedily for the laissez-faire ideal. (Major Smedley, for example, is a free-enterprise and free-trade fanatic who has stood as an independent candidate for Parliament.) Much of its public support came from the people who hanker for the resurrection of the private bus companies of their youth, which gave "good service" by bullying employees and fighting for customers. Its last-ditch political games were ultra-Conservative ones; Mr. Patrick Wall, MP, took part in two broadcasts and urged talks with the Rhodesian Government.

The idea of broadcasting one's viewpoint which now has extremely restricted outlets has always fascinated political minorities. A "free" radio as it is envisaged in this sense would be an opposition radio, dedicated to anti-régime or anti-system material. Whether it could exist physically and technically is doubtful. It would require either finding a legal loophole, as the pirates did, or operating mobile guerrilla stations against the law. In either case the cost would be impossible; and, if it were not, the expectation of a future short.

But the prospect would be impossible in a more fundamental way. The idea of propaganda for conversion is largely a mistaken one. It supposes that if a case is stated convincingly or attractively enough, men will accept it. There is remarkably little evidence for this. How many people, for instance, were affected by the gospel programmes on pirate radio? I never heard anyone speak of them: yet they had a daily half-hour on nearly every station. Before the war nightly propaganda programmes in English were put out by Moscow Radio. They were intelligent and appealing, but one never heard of a single person becoming a Communist on their account. If the process works at all, it works at meetings and gatherings, where there is participation, rather than by the individualized radio medium.

The message, in fact, is of small importance compared with the effect of the medium on consciousness. Present-day radio fills the previously deserted space between literature and group-orientated arts in popular culture, linking private awareness with common identity. For its content, rhythmic sound may well be enough. Pirate radio's function was to define the area—several millions strong—of the transformation. The transistor generation needed the pirates, but wanted the authoritarianism of commerce no more than that of the State. For all the idiocy of the disc-jockey cult, the same generation has produced growing movements of protest and constructive disobedience. We rarely see what is growing under our feet.



## French Lesson

J.M.W.

FOR A FEW WEEKS in the heady month of May Frenchmen turned on their radios with unaccustomed interest, even fascination. Something extraordinary was happening in France. Not only were special events taking place, but they were being told about them on the ORTF. The reporters who were out in the streets, as they had been years ago in Algiers, were giving "live" and obviously uncut accounts of the battles between the students and the CRS riot police whose brutality they did not hesitate to describe. For once the radio was telling the truth and not maundering on with the old Gaullist themes of gold, the Common Market, the ugly American, Quebec, sport and other tranquilizers. At the height of the riots the Government withdrew permission to use mobile studios and transmitting equipment on the grounds that instantaneous reporting was aiding the rioters. (Oddly enough, permission was re-accorded just before the Gaullist demonstration which closed the series.) The reporters carried on, using private telephones which were put at their disposal by sympathetic citizens. Government interference in television programmes brought on a strike in that medium which all but paralysed it and enabled some courageous journalists to carry on giving balanced news in spite of strong pressure. Mass meetings were held in the Maison de la Radio and demands for a new independent statute were made.

What were the radio and television employees revolting against? They had many reasons for discontent, but the most striking in a medium devoted chiefly to information and to art was the prevalence of *censorship*. Programmes were often cut or completely suppressed through outside interference. For example, a film on the state of the hospitals had to be submitted to the Ministry of Health to receive its "imprimatur" which could be and was refused because it was far from flattering. Furthermore, precensorship was exercised within the Office by the heads of departments who had been appointed, not for their competence in radio or TV but because they were Gaullist "inconditionnels". Producers who did not toe the line were either turned out or, more subtly, forgotten within the organization and their work was never shown. Another of the grievances was that of *slanted information*. The Secretariat à l'Information which controls the media of radio and television "inspired" the news bulletins, and pursued a long term policy of indoctrination on selected themes. The news readers were obvious sycophants (though some of them showed momentary bravery when it seemed the Government was losing ground) and the media were employed as an instrument of government. *Bureaucracy* was another source of discontent, the Office has an administrative body

out of all proportion to its active personnel, and linked with this was the practice of appointing senior "cadres" from outside the organization on a political basis.

During the meetings which took place at that time the strikers made several demands, the principal of which were: *objectivity* in news reporting, *an independent statute* like that of the BBC, and internal reorganization. Unfortunately for them, the determining events during these weeks were out of their control and took place in the offices of the Communist Party, CGT and other unions, and in the "left wing" parties, which, having "jumped on the train after it had started", were more than anxious to stop it so that they could get back in the driver's cab. They displayed an almost pathetic eagerness to negotiate with the Government and thus de-fuse the bomb constituted by at least nine million strikers many of whom were occupying their factories just as the media workers were occupying the ORTF. Negotiations were confined to minimum wage agreements without touching the basic structure of industry and arrangements were made to hold elections. De Gaulle in the second of his televised speeches scored an easy victory, he had no need to threaten army intervention, the "enemy", that is to say the left wing parties, were on his side. He was able to brandish the menace of "totalitarian Communism" before the electors with the desired effect. The Gaullist landslide in the elections left the employees of the ORTF in an untenable position. Lacking political or union support from outside, they were now at the mercy of the Government which proceeded to purge the organization. (This was not the first Gaullist purge, an earlier one having taken place in 1959/60.) The proposals for the reform and change of statute for the media were, of course, quietly forgotten. (Not only by the Government, but, significantly, by the so-called Opposition.)

The influence of these events on the programmes of the ORTF which were already of an indifferent quality has naturally been to make them worse. Most obvious is a disastrous decline in quality, both in studio technique and in the professionalism of the speakers (the Government has had to scrape the barrel to find even amateurish newscasters who are already famous for their "gaffes"). Linking between programmes, camera work and similar aspects have all suffered from the replacement of personnel. Even certain "idols" as famous as Leon Zitrone have been overthrown from their positions from which they have so unctuously held forth for so long whilst kow-towing to Gaullism. They have been replaced by "inconditionnels" who, whilst no one accuses them of possessing backbones, do at least have the advantage of possessing new faces. Programmes advertised in *Télé 7 Jours* do not always come on the air, not merely for reasons of censorship as of old but through the inability of the staff to put them on. Censorship itself is so blatantly ubiquitous as to be inconspicuous in a programme entirely considered as propaganda or conditioning. The old red herrings are dragged out with a splash of white and blue for the needs of nationalism: Quebec, Yalta, the Common Market, the Tiercé, and lots of sport. Even the most uncritical of listeners and viewers are



disappointed. One by one they switch off, or more accurately, fail to switch on. They know they are being denied the free discussion which is supposed to be the basis of their "democracy". They are being cheated, but beyond shrugging in cynical resignation what can they do? Have they any choice?

On the borders of France are situated a series of commercial radio stations whose broadcasts are tolerated by the Government and even accorded certain relay facilities. They are more popular with the public than the state radio and enjoy a reputation for greater objectivity in their news programmes. How free are they and how far is this reputation justified? A Government holding company has succeeded in buying a controlling or dominant interest in three out of four which enables it to place its creatures in control. Monte Carlo, run by an ex-Minister, is 80% owned by the SOFIRAD alias the French Government, its ancillary Sud Radio in Andorra is 97% owned by the same company, which also holds 46.8% of the shares in Europe No. 1 which broadcasts from the Saar. Only Radio Luxemburg, with help from the Government of the Principality, has so far succeeded in resisting its embraces, but even the latter is dependent on French Government goodwill for the broadcasting of its programmes and for studio and communications facilities in Paris. Thus, all four are now almost completely conformist again after their halcyon days in May. Viewers in Alsace can watch German programmes on the television sets and many do, despite voting Gaullist at the elections. Italian and British programmes can be heard and seen in the parts of France near those countries, but the language barrier makes their impact slight, let alone their foreign origin in a country which has raised chauvinism into a state religion. Within these limitations, and they are great, the "stations périphériques" are now more important than the ORTF but their broadcasts are now almost indistinguishable in content as they were in the past and perhaps even more so.

What of the press then? Does that provide an alternative? Statistics suggest that the French are not great newspaper readers. Their national papers have a combined readership of some four million copies daily and most of these papers support the Government. *L'Humanité* wriggles in embarrassment to defend the Communist Party's unrevolutionary antics and discredits itself all the more. Numerous weeklies, mostly born of the Algerian war, keep up a circulation which generally sags for want of sensational events by injecting large doses of eroticism into their columns. Even the *Canard Enchaîné* which many see as a symbol of the freedom of the press in France must not be taken as an example. It is an institution and its continued appearance can mask the seizure or "interdiction à l'affichage" of other less famous journals or books. As the last Governor General of Algeria remarked when asked why he did not ban the *Canard* when it was attacking him, "Je ne veux pas avoir l'air d'un con". But, the reader will ask, what about *le Monde*, that paragon of newspapers? *Le Monde*, even more than today's *Times* is a paper for "top people" without having to say so. Its format and content do the trick. Only the highly educated read

it and today account for some 350,000. *Le Monde* can afford to take an independent line and often does so, but the Government probably considers its electoral effect to be marginal, as indeed is that of all newspapers in the face of television and the personal appeals of skilled politicians. Furthermore, whilst *le Monde* is generally critical at the time, it is noticeable that it adopts a "French" i.e. Gaullist posture after about three months. *Le Monde* is special in having a network of correspondents, but most newspapers seem to rely exclusively on France Presse, which is a Government agency, for their news and this is often noticeable through word for word accounts being printed in several papers and even broadcast concerning any one event. Thus the press is not overtly censored, but it is certainly "guided". In any case its impact on the population is not very great.

Thus the future of radio and television is of paramount importance. What is happening? What is likely to happen? The purge continues. Only a few days ago, one of the heads of the television service went abroad; he returned to find that his job had been abolished and that he was out of work. The *Canard Enchaîné* reports a general police investigation of the personnel using tapes made during protest meetings in May as the basis of their enquiries. The Government is determined to get a firm grip on the media, having become convinced that it cannot survive if there is a "free" system. On the other hand, control is only being maintained at the expense of quality. Self-respecting artists and technicians prefer working for the press, external radio stations or in the film industry.

Another trend is the generalization of advertising which has been gradually and slyly introduced into television without legal sanction. Using the pretext of advertising products (without brand names) in the "national interest", though the advertisements were paid for by industry, the viewers have been given a surfeit of: "pruneaux d'Agen, le cuir, fromages de France, la Loterie Nationale, petits pois chez soi, les glaces de marque" and now a rather meaningless slogan, "acheter bien pour acheter plus". It is planned to go over to named product advertising in the near future, but it is rumoured that advertisers are holding back, dismayed by the proposed cost of advertising time, by the demand that they furnish details of their balance sheet and other details before being accepted, by the list of products that cannot be advertised and, more seriously, by the fall in viewing figures at what was the peak viewing time just before the eight o'clock news. Public disaffection for the news may not last, however, and there has been some timid "liberalization" in the hope of bringing them back to the fold. One popular news magazine "Cinq Colonnes à la Une" has been reinstated on condition it practises self-censorship. As this programme is produced by a team from the *Figaro* newspaper which is solidly Gaullist, little is to be feared from that quarter. Advertising will, no doubt, encourage "popular" programmes, probably of low cultural merit, but giving maximum viewing figures among the admass as in England and encouraging a certain competence, even slickness in presentation which is at present lacking.



Until this comes to pass the present diet of old films, puffs for actors and singers in insipid variety programmes, occasional plays, and perhaps the sole merit of including almost no American slush, will continue on French television. Whenever de Gaulle appears on the screen in the midst of this characterless horde, he appears a titan. He is the television personality of the year in France and no other person of integrity is allowed sufficient (or indeed any) television time to compete with him. As he said, "I have two weapons, TV and TV. TV because I am so successful on it, and TV because my opponents are so unsuccessful on it" and he might have added "when I deign to let them appear".

Sound radio provides the usual musical continuum for the proles interspersed with manufactured news, nationalist sport, weather, but it is not as bad as the TV.

Most of the dissatisfied in France now pin their hopes on what is called l'après Gaullisme in vulture-like anticipation of his death; no one fondly imagines he will retire first. The "left wing", having missed their chance of removing him by revolution, despair of electoral success and can only look forward to his being removed as Dr. Salazar has just been removed, by some fatal illness. De Gaulle may live a lot longer. He will live as long as he can just to spite them.

Is there, then, any hope or must we echo John Ardagh in "The New French Revolution", "people have the censorship they deserve". Perhaps in the student body which provoked the events in May through the Mouvement du 22 Mars there is still sufficient energy and determination to survive this period of reaction and when its members become "cadres" they may have kept enough libertarian feeling to insist on the freedom of the media. A significant number of students have shaken off the straitjacket of Marxist and other nineteenth century jargon and are approaching the problems of society from a new viewpoint. It will be all too easy to fall victim to discouragement and disillusion. Many, no doubt, believed that they were being supported by the "workers" who occupied their factories and practised direct action at the point of production as though they were doing so out of conviction and to further a definite policy. The action of workers in the media was particularly encouraging as they did not merely strike, but continued to work, but for new motives and for better objectives. They, at least, *did* consciously attempt to act in the vacuum created by Gaullist hesitation and temporary impotence. It is all the more sadening that they should have been left high and dry by the channelling off of the strikers' energies into futile wage claims. Since then, many of the boldest of them have bowed their heads in the interest of their pay packets, only to have them "guillotined" by the revengeful Gaullists. As de Gaulle himself is reported to have said, "When I was on my knees they raised their heads." This scornful gibe contains a bitter truth for his countrymen, though it is to their credit that some of them who had been chosen for their unconditional fidelity to the régime showed an unexpected and selfless devotion to an ideal during that brief summer of free media in France.


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# Anarchy 89

May Days in France

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# Anarchy 90

 Student anarchy

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# Anarchy 91

Artists and anarchism

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# Anarchy 92

A tale of two schools

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